

much needed assistance towards the Territories.

There are many other programs, and we will discuss this as we go along, but the IGIA meeting early next month is the perfect vehicle through which to craft and review policy initiatives which will bring prosperity to those American communities which are off-shore and have a very different relationship to Washington, D.C. than most Americans.

I call upon the administration to work with the representatives of the Territories here in Washington and the chief executives of the respective territories to craft a new economic policy which will make sure that no child in Pago Pago goes without the educational life chances that children in the U.S. mainland have, that no family in St. Croix or St. Thomas will not have the same access to health care that Americans everywhere deserve, and that bread winners in Hagatna, Guam, do not have to leave their homeland and travel 6,000 miles to find a decent job.

#### ENACT H.R. 6, MARRIAGE TAX ELIMINATION ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BARRETT of Nebraska). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER. Mr. Speaker, over the last several years, many of us have been asking a question that we hear time and time again back home. I have the privilege of representing the south side of Chicago and the south suburbs, communities like Joliet and Lansing and Morris and rural communities like Tonica and elsewhere; and they often ask me a pretty basic question. That question is, as we talk about taxes, they say, why? Why do married working couples, a husband and wife who are both in the workforce, why do they pay higher taxes when they get married? They ask, is it right, is it fair that under our Tax Code, married working couples pay higher taxes? On average, 25 million married working couples pay, on average, \$1,400 more in higher taxes than identical couples who choose not to get married, but live together outside of marriage. That is not right.

The folks back home tell me that it is time that those of us here in Washington should do something about it, that we should work to eliminate what has been called the marriage tax penalty. Mr. Speaker, \$1,400, the average marriage tax penalty, is a lot of money back home in Illinois. Mr. Speaker, \$1,400 is one year's tuition for a nursing student at Joliet Junior College, our local community college; it is three months of day care for a working mom and dad with children. It is almost 4,000 diapers for a family with a newborn child.

It is real money for real people; and there are, of course, some here in

Washington who say they would much rather spend that money here in Washington than bring about tax fairness by eliminating the marriage tax penalty.

Well, I am proud to say this House is doing something about the marriage tax penalty. Last year we passed and sent legislation to the President which would have wiped out the marriage tax penalty for over 25 million couples; and unfortunately, President Clinton and Vice President Gore vetoed that bill. They had a lot of excuses. They wanted to spend that money. But this year, there is no excuse. We have Valentine's Day approaching, and what better gift to give 25 million married working couples who suffer the marriage tax penalty than to pass legislation wiping out the marriage tax penalty.

This Thursday, we will be considering in the House legislation approved by the Committee on Ways and Means, H.R. 6, the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, which I am proud to say now has 236 cosponsors, including almost 30 Democrats who have joined with us in our effort to eliminate the marriage tax penalty. We help real people.

Let me introduce a couple here. This couple here, Shad and Michelle Hallihan of Joliet, Illinois, two public school teachers in Joliet, Illinois. They happen to make about \$60,000 in combined income from their two teaching salaries, and Shad and Michelle suffer almost the average marriage tax penalty.

Well, under the legislation that the House is going to be considering this week, Shad and Michelle will benefit, because two public school teachers who chose to get married who now suffer the marriage tax penalty will essentially have their marriage tax penalty wiped out. Michelle told me the other day, she says, Congressman, tell your friends in the Congress, particularly those who believe it is not a good idea to eliminate the marriage tax penalty, what wiping out the marriage tax penalty would mean for them.

They say \$1,000, which is essentially the marriage tax penalty, would buy 3,000 diapers for their newborn baby. That is money that is currently going to Washington that they could use to take care of their child. Frankly, if we want to be fair, it is their money. We should eliminate the marriage tax penalty.

This Thursday, H.R. 6, the Marriage Tax Elimination Act, will help couples like Shad and Michele Hallihan. We do it in several ways. We double the standard deduction. One-half of married couples do not itemize their taxes; they use the standard deduction, so we double it for joint filers. The marriage penalty is created when a married couple of course get married, they file their taxes jointly, their combined income usually pushes them into a higher tax bracket. That is what pushes Shad and Michelle into the 28 percent bracket.

What we want to do, of course, is for the nonitemizers, which is about half

of the married couples who suffer the marriage penalty, to double the standard deduction for joint filers to make it twice that of singles. For those who itemize, who are the other half of married couples who suffer the marriage tax penalty, those who itemize are homeowners. The average middle-class family itemizes their taxes because they own a home. We want to help them and provide marriage tax relief as well. So we widen the 15 percent bracket, the basic tax bracket that every one of us pays. We are all in the 15 percent bracket, regardless of our income, for the lowest bottom bracket of our income. By widening the bracket so that joint filers, married couples, can earn twice as much as a single filer and be in that same bracket, we help those who itemize.

We also help the working poor. There is a marriage penalty for the earned income credit, and we provide tax relief for them.

This Thursday, let us have an overwhelming bipartisan majority. Let us work together. Let us eliminate the marriage tax penalty. There are no excuses. We want to be fair. Eliminate the marriage tax penalty.

#### EXTREMISM, RACISM AND XENOPHOBIA SWEEPING AUSTRIA: HOUSE RESOLUTION 417

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 19, 1999, the gentleman from California (Mr. LANTOS) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. LANTOS. Mr. Speaker, last week I called the attention of my colleagues to the rise of neofascism in Austria. The deed is now done. The extremist, racist, xenophobic FPÖ party has entered the Government of Austria. I want to thank all of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle who have joined me in supporting this resolution expressing our regret and dismay.

Joerg Haider, the leader of this party, had ample praise for Adolf Hitler and for SS veterans whom he described as "decent people with character who stuck to their beliefs."

I want to commend the European Union, all 14 nations, which have chosen to downgrade their diplomatic relations with Austria. I want to commend our own State Department for recalling our Ambassador to Austria and for promising to watch developments carefully.

At a time, Mr. Speaker, when the European Union, the United States, and other democratic nations are working actively to discourage ethnic hatred in the republics of the former Yugoslavia and elsewhere, Joerg Haider and his neofascist allies are appealing to racist sentiment and xenophobia. Haider learned this lesson early on. His father joined the Nazi Party in 1929. His mother was an active and enthusiastic Nazi Party member as a teacher. Haider has surely learned the lesson well.